

FROM DANTE TO SAINT CATHERINE

"see, they crown Him with the thorns of their impious wealth ; they defile Him with most impure spittal, and assail Him with viperous hissing; they strike Him with the spear of their poisonous deeds ; and, so far as in them lies, mocked, naked, poor, and scourged, they drag Him again to Calvary, and nail Him again to the Cross." Avignon is the Babylon of the West, the home of all vices and misery, the same that the Evangelist saw in spirit; little, indeed, according to the circuit of its walls, but immense in its accumulation of wickedness.¹

On December 2, 1352, the campanile of St. Peter's was struck by lightning. All the bells were dashed to the ground and fused together as though they had been melted in a furnace. At once the report spread through Rome that Pope Clement was dead. " Lo now," it seemed to a Swedish widow that Christ said in her heart, " the bells are burning, and men are crying out: Our lord is dead, our lord the Pope has departed; blessed be this day, but not blessed that lord. How strange, for where all should cry : May that lord live long and live happily ; there they cry and say with joy : Down with him and may he not rise up again ! But it is no wonder, for he himself, who should have cried : *Come, and ye shall find rest for your souls*; he cried : *Come, and behold me in pomp and ambition more than Solomon. Come to my Cour^ and empty your purses, and ye shall find perdition for your souls*. For thus did he cry by example and in deed. Therefore the time of My wrath is now approaching, and I shall judge him as one that has scattered the flock of Peter. O what a judgment awaits him ! But, nevertheless, if he will yet be converted to Me, I will run to meet him half-way like a tender father."²

Clement's successor, Etienne d'Albret, who took the tide of Innocent VI (1352-1362), was a simple man, "of good life and not much knowledge;" he made an earnest, but ineffectual attempt to reform the papal court. The confusion of French politics and the presence of bands of mercenaries in Provence

¹ *Epist. sine Mulo*, XVI., XIX., XX.

³ *Revelationes S. Btrgttæ*, VI. 96. Cf. M. Villani, iii. 42. Clement actually died at Avignon on December 6.